

PNEC *Sharing the Good News!*

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

"God Be For Us"

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A special note: Thanks be to God for a sister in Christ named Lidia who was the inspiration for this Sharing the Good News.

On a recent vacation to a Central American country, I was pleasantly surprised and truly blessed by the presence of God through a woman named Lidia.

After enjoying a typical "native" breakfast at quaint, local, outdoor restaurant called Soda Lidia, I needed to pay the bill. The server, who turned out to be the owner Lidia, could not accept my credit card as payment because she did not know how to work the credit card machine. She explained that her son was the only one who knew how to use the machine and he was not around. She then went on to say that her son was on "encuentro". She could not explain what encuentro meant in English so she explained the meaning in Spanish. In Spanish she said, "para sanidad de alma." which means for "for healthy soul." After her explanation she smiled and said, "I am Christian!"

I was amazed by Lidia's bold proclamation! I told her that I too was Christian. In spite of our language barrier I discovered that encuentro was similar to what we call a spiritual retreat. As I was leaving the restaurant Lidia came over to me and handed me her business card. She made a point of telling me to look at the back of the card. When I

turned it over I found the words of Romans 8:31 written in English and in Spanish.

The text in English read: **What shall we say then to those things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**

I was fascinated by the words "be for us". I had learned this verse as "is for us". I thought it was a misprint or a cultural colloquialism for the words of the verse. After arriving home and doing some research I found that the words "be for us" are the words used in the King James Version of the Bible. When translated from Greek "be for us" would be the correct grammar of the time of the writing of the King James Version. When translated the words mean on behalf of us. I also learned that in Hebrew those same words can mean "in front of my face."

I began to ponder the phrase "God be for us" and the words "God before us" came to mind. I thought how profound those words are in this season of our church year. This Christmas as we celebrate, the birth of Immanuel, God does indeed come "before us and on behalf of us". In the baby named Jesus, lying in a manger, God is "in front of our faces".

My prayer is that because we know this living and loving God who came "before us" we too may be moved to boldly proclaim at any season of the year, as Lidia did so proudly and unashamedly, "I am Christian."

Nancy

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